

In the Specification:

Please amend the paragraph beginning at line 7 on page 17 of the specification as follows:

--Telomere length was measured as described by Herbert et al., 1999, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, 96, 14276-14281. Briefly, mean telomere length was evaluated by using telomere restriction fragment analysis, a variation of standard Southern analysis, and was quantitated as described by Shay et al., 1994, *Methods Mol. Genet.*, 5, 263-268. Digested samples were resolved on a 0.7% agarose gel and hybridized to a telomeric probe ((³²P)(TTAGGG)₄ (SEQ ID NO: 11) oligonucleotide).--